

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Last week, the Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Subcommittee of the House of Representatives approved \$265,000 for the Berkshire Youth Development Project. This project will strengthen and broaden existing successful private-public partnerships in evidence-based apprenticeship/mentoring programs, the arts community, and youth leadership opportunities. These programs have been proven to enhance factors that reduce at-risk behaviors among teens in Berkshire County.

“This funding allows three individually strong community coalitions to combine forces to help Berkshire youth,” said Olver. “While many private companies and individuals want to help young people in their own communities, they are often constrained by a lack of support services. This proposal will help clear these barriers, allowing vigorous community engagement to help young people avoid at-risk behaviors and expand their boundaries of possibility,” Olver added.

“The Berkshire Youth Development Project is thrilled to have Congressman Olver's support for our county-wide initiatives. With support from the federal budget, we will expand and sustain youth development programs that train, mentor and prepare youth for entering the workplace so they may live and thrive in Berkshire County,” said Lannie Moore, Executive Director of the Railroad Street Youth Project.

“Our approach sets us apart from traditional youth programming in that we--the adults, businesses, community members--begin with the interests of the youth themselves. We build apprenticeships in culinary arts, for example, with partners from local restaurants in order to respond to youth who need jobs and advancement opportunities in the county's service-based economy,” added Moore.

“Congressman Olver has been a champion of community development and access to healthcare for all Berkshire residents. Now, with his support for the Berkshire Youth Development Project, we will create more opportunities for our young people to become empowered and engaged members of the Berkshire County community,” Moore said.

“We are thrilled to have the support of Congressman Olver and the House Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice and Science. The BYDP is the only collaboration of its kind in Berkshire County seeking and supporting evidence-based practices that promote positive youth development. Pittsfield kids face all kinds of obstacles to healthy lifestyles. With this funding,

we can create positive options for our youth in Pittsfield and throughout the county,” said Karen Cole, Coordinator with the Pittsfield Prevention Partnership.

“The Northern Berkshire Community Coalition is excited about Congressman Olver's support for federal funding to support the Berkshire Youth Development Project. With these resources, the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition's youth development program (UNITY) will engage youth in service work for the broader Northern Berkshire community. Recently, the City of North Adams worked with the UNITY Youth Leadership Program and their efforts to increase youth dialogue has led to the creation of the North Adams Youth Commission,” said Al Bashevkin of the Northern Berkshire Community Coalition.

“The Northern Berkshire Community Coalition has worked with the Berkshire Youth Development Project to build county wide mechanisms to address issues that our younger population is facing. Conversations among providers through the Berkshire Youth Worker Summit and with county youth through the annual 411 in the 413 Youth Conference have increased opportunities for youth and providers to explore key issues impacting young people in Berkshire County,” Bashevkin added.

The FY 2011 Commerce Justice Science Appropriations Bill now awaits consideration by the full House and Senate.

For more information, please contact Lannie Moore with Railroad Street Youth Project, (413) 429-1552.

###